TRINIDAD & TOBAGO

O·S·H·A

The Occupational Safety and
Health Authority and Agency

Returning to Work Guidelines

"THE NEW NORMAL"

UPDATED

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INTRODUCTION

The Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has caused the world to implement a plethora of measures to fight its spread. In Trinidad and Tobago all non-essential activities were suspended and the population was asked to remain at home except for certain excluded activity. These measures impacted the operations of Industrial Establishments. Many places of work were forced to scale back or stop operations while others were able to adapt remote work systems. As we prepare to re-open our places of work, employers must now develop systems to protect employees and by extension society as the risk posed by the virus is still active.

In preparing to return to work it must be understood that some of the controls introduced in response to the pandemic must remain in place until such a time that there is a vaccine. Additionally plans should include the likelihood of a resurgence of the virus and the reintroduction of restrictive measures.

OSHA's COVID-19 Policy Position on Returning to Work

As the working population of Trinidad and Tobago charts a course of recovery from the effects of the COVID -19 pandemic, the Agency's position on returning to work is similar in sentiments to those of other regulatory bodies across the globe. Safety and health must **come first** when considering recommencing work in the midst of the COVID-19 outbreak.

In fact it is a pivotal pillar in the protection of the workforce and by extension the community in order to enhance employee engagement and productivity.

For employers, there should be priority on adopting a systematic **plan–do–check–act** approach. It has been noted that some employers have already been updating their plans for a phased return to work, in accordance with the guidelines from the Ministry of Health.

Employers who have not already made plans, need to develop them and take suitable and sufficient preliminary action now – focus should not simply be on the opening of workplaces and expecting workers to return, it must also allocate simultaneous importance to the safety and health of employees and the inevitable creation of a 'new normal'.

There needs to be a planned, risk-controlled approach – based on strong **leadership, worker involvement and sound safety and health advice** – to ensure safe people, plant, premises and processes. Multidisciplinary teams should assess the risks and general safety and health arrangements within organisations for COVID-19 security and ensure appropriate action **before** employees return.

Employers need to adhere to applicable national COVID-19 policy and guidance, including those for safe travel, and conduct inspection and assessment of all relevant areas, to ensure there has been no deterioration of safety and health standards during the lockdown.

Employers also need to ensure safe **people, plant, premises, and processes**- the **4 P's**. These parameters can tell us where to intervene to protect people, the factors which, when interacting with those people, may pose a greater risk or serve to mitigate it and they can help us understand the effectiveness of these factors and improve their design:

People - *Employees, the public, managers - these are the human elements we seek to influence*

- Assess COVID-19-related risks and protect all workers, including the vulnerable
- Ensure that **only** those workers who **cannot** work from home and who **can** return to work safely, do so
- Provide adequate training, consultation, communication and awareness, with a means for workers to raise concerns
- Support ergonomics and wellbeing for home workers

Plant - *Fleets and equipment fall into this category.*

- Provide necessary personal protective equipment and safe-use guidance.
- Support appropriate use of face-coverings for reducing spread to others, explaining its limitations.
- Check heating, ventilation, lighting and hygiene arrangements.
- Ensure safe recommissioning of plant and equipment and statutory inspections.

Organisations need to stay updated, monitor performance and check that everything is working well, strengthening arrangements where needed.

Premises - *These are the environments which can be made safer, including specific locations, distribution centres or stores.*

- Provide physical distancing (signage, distance marking, barriers, one-way systems, staggered start / finish / break times, reduced numbers, etc)
- Improve hygiene (washing facilities, hand sanitiser, regular surface cleaning, tissues and disposal services, etc)
- Improve ventilation arrangements.
- Redesign processes to reduce risks, including, for example, retaining teleworking.

Processes - *These are the strategies and tactics, such as safety campaigns or training that organizations undertake to improve safety*

- Review, update and communicate all risk assessments in the light of COVID-19 security requirements.
- Offer ongoing mental health support and flexibility for work-life balance issues.
- Ensure workers who are symptomatic know they should not be at work and anyone who develops symptoms is isolated and sent home.
- Check fire safety, first aid, water and asbestos management arrangements.

The Occupational Safety and Health Authority and Agency will offer guidance and support in this return to work process.

Risk Assessment and Minimising Exposure to COVID-19 at work

Precautions should always be determined by a risk assessment and appropriate control measures need to be put in place for returning workers to ensure that workplaces limit the opportunity for further viral spread.

The identification and assessment of safety and health risks inherent in the working environment under normal conditions is the starting point for managing safety and health. This assessment must take into consideration COVID-19 and its associated risks. Employers are duty bound to review and revise their risk assessments when there is a change to the work process and to consider all risks. When revising the risk assessment, attention should be given to any anomalies or situations that can cause problems and evaluations must be made to determine how these issues can impact upon the organisation becoming more resilient in the long-term. Involving workers and their representatives in the revision of risk assessment is vital.

It must be borne in mind that a risk assessment does not control risk. It is the actions of individuals who apply controls identified in the risk assessment that mitigate risk. Is there a system in place to manage OSH?

There must be a **Policy**, designated **People** and clear **Procedures** for effective risk control– the organization must be able to demonstrate how it plans, organizes, monitors, audits, reviews and continually improves preventative measures to mitigate against risk. Remember, paperwork supports a process but it is not the process.
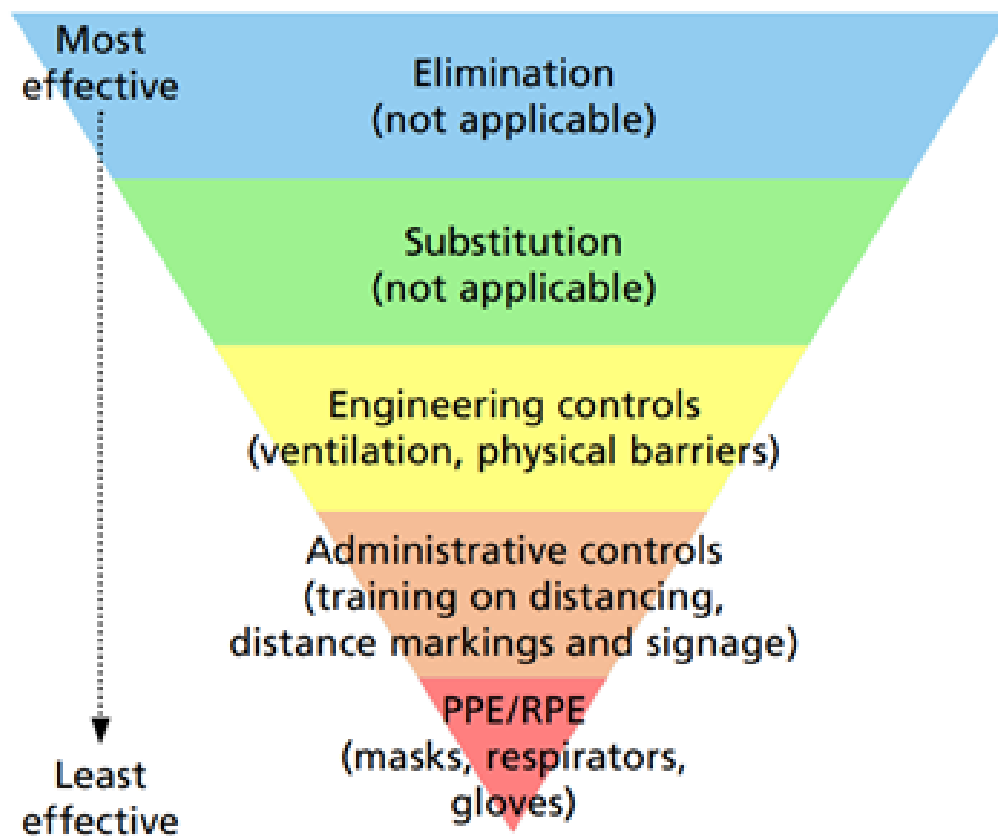
When conducting the risk assessment ensure that you obtain the most recent information on the hazard (i.e. the virus) and how it is spread. This information is available from Ministry of Health and other related Public Health Authorities.

The likelihood of exposure should also be considered. Factors to consider are:

- Whether employees are exposed on their commute to work.

- Which employees are likely to be exposed to infected persons or surfaces at the place of work.

- Do employees have medical conditions that increases their vulnerability?

- Are employees exposed to possible sources of infection at home?

The implementation of safe work practices to limit exposure to COVID-19 at work requires effective assessment of the risks. Through the hierarchy of controls, measures can be developed to minimise workers exposure to the virus.

Covid-19 hierarchy of control

Most effective

- Elimination (not applicable)
- Substitution (not applicable)
- Engineering controls (ventilation, physical barriers)
- Administrative controls (training on distancing, distance markings and signage)
- PPE/RPE (masks, respirators, gloves)

Least effective

Deciding which controls are best suited to your workplace requires a number of considerations like:

- The design of the workplace

- How the surfaces will be sanitised

- How equipment will be used

- How can work schedules be organised to minimise person to person contact; and

- Whether employees have adequate information to protect themselves from infection at work

The following are some examples of mitigating measures that can be employed:

- Conduct only essential work for the time being. It may be possible to postpone some work until the risk is lower. If possible, deliver services remotely e.g. via phone or video conferencing, instead of in person. Ensure that only workers who are essential to the job are present at the workplace and minimise the presence of third parties.

- Reduce, as far as is reasonably practicable, physical contact between workers during meetings or breaks. Eliminate, and if not possible, limit physical interaction with and between customers. For example, through online or phone orders, contactless delivery or managed entry (while also avoiding crowding outside), and physical distancing both inside and outside the premises.

- When delivering goods, do so through pick-up or delivery outside the premises. Advise drivers on good hygiene in the cabin and provide them with appropriate sanitation gel or wipes.

- Reduce contact between different parts of your business at the start and end of shifts.

- Stage the timing of meal breaks to reduce the number of people sharing a cafeteria, staff room, or kitchen.

- Supply soap and water or appropriate hand sanitiser at convenient places and advise workers to wash their hands frequently.

- Clean your premises frequently, especially counters, door handles, tools and other surfaces that people touch often and ensure good ventilation is provided if possible.

- Provide workers with tissue and waste bins lined with a plastic bag so that they can be disposed of in manner which eliminates contact with the contents. If you have identified a risk of infection despite having applied all appropriate safety measures, then provide all necessary PPE. It is important to train workers in the correct use of PPE, ensuring that they follow the Ministry of Health guidance on the use of facemasks and gloves.

- Place posters that encourage staying at home when sick; cough and sneeze etiquette; and hand hygiene at the entrance to the workplace and in other areas where they will be visible.

How to deal with a Safety and Health Concern?

If you have sufficient reason to believe that you are at risk at your place of work, then you have a right to take steps to secure your safety and health.

- Discuss your concern with your employer, supervisor or manager.

- You may also wish to discuss the matter with a representative of the safety and health committee at your workplace.

- If you have raised a matter with your employer and you have not gotten a satisfactory resolution get in touch with the Occupational Safety and Health Agency. Our contact information is listed at the end of the document.

Resuming work after a period of closure

If your workplace has been closed for a period of time for reasons related to COVID-19, make a plan for when work resumes that takes into account safety and health.

You should consider the following in your plan:

- Update your risk assessment as described above and refer to COVID-19 guidance from the Ministry of Health.

- Alter the layout of the workplace and the organisation of work that will reduce COVID-19 transmission.

- Consider the resumption of operations in stages to allow acclimatization to the new working arrangements.

- Be sure to inform workers about the changes and provide them with such information, instruction and training, as is necessary, before the resumption of operations.

- Pay special attention to workers who are at high risk and be prepared to protect the most vulnerable, including older people and those with chronic conditions (including hypertension, lung or heart problems, diabetes, or who are undergoing cancer treatment or some other immunosuppression) and pregnant workers. Pay attention also to workers with close family members who are at high risk.

- Consider the implementation of a support system for workers who may be suffering from anxiety or stress. This could range from managers inquiring about workers' well-being more often; facilitating exchanges or buddying between colleagues; changes in work organisation and work tasks; and referring stressed employees to an employee assistance programme. Be aware that workers may have gone through traumatic events such as the serious illness or death of a relative or friend, or may be experiencing financial difficulties.

- Workers may have concerns about an increased risk of infection at the workplace and may not want to return. It is important to understand their concerns, provide as much information about the measures implemented and the support available to them.

The most significant adjustment when returning to work may be changes to the culture of the organisation. This will include adjustment of attitudes and behaviours. Employers may need to consider training as a strategy to reintroduce the employees to their workplace and to develop the types of behaviours required. The training should highlight the personal benefits that employees will derive from changes in attitude and behaviour.

Returning To Work After Recovering From COVID-19

During the course of the pandemic persons may have become infected with the COVID-19 virus. Places of work should have a policy in place to reintegrate employees who may have been absent due to illness.

The following are some steps to consider when planning for an employee's return to work:

- Develop (if one is not in existence) a return to work place policy. The policy should have input from management, worker representatives and human resources.

- Remain in contact with the employee throughout his/her ailment and when he or she is preparing to return to work.

- Develop a plan for the recovered worker to return to work – this will include a risk assessment specific to that worker and his or her environment which will include introducing controls to limit any risks identified.

- Monitor the employee when he or she returns and review the plan where necessary.

Working From Home

Workers should be encouraged to work from home and continue to work from home if the nature of their job allows it. For most of these workers, their home working environment is likely to be deficient in varying ways in comparison to their workplace. The extent to which the home environment can be modified will vary according to the situation of the worker and the time and resources available for the modification.

Advice on staying safe and healthy while working from home is available form OSHA's guidance document on 'Working From Home'.

You should also read our brochures, 'A Guide to Risk Assessment' and 'Prevention of Occupational Diseases'.

How to make a Report?

Call us 📞

OSHA HOTLINE 623-OSHA (6742)

or

Email us ✉️

oshainspectorate@osha.gov.tt

or

Write us ✉️

Attention to: The Chief Inspector
The Occupational Safety and Health Agency
#50-54 Duke Place, Duke Street, Port of Spain

Helpful Links with Guidelines on Returning to Work by Economic Activity

Transportation and storage

Canada

Protecting Yourself and Others (Transportation)
https://www.ccohs.ca/images/products/pandemiccovid19/pdf/transportation.pdf
Protecting Yourself and Others (Airline and Ground Crews)
https://www.ccohs.ca/images/products/pandemiccovid19/pdf/airline_ground_crews.pdf
Protecting Yourself and Others (Home Delivery and Couriers)
https://www.ccohs.ca/images/products/pandemiccovid19/pdf/home_delivery_couriers.pdf

United Kingdom

Working safely during coronavirus (COVID-19) in other people's homes
https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/homes
Working safely during coronavirus (COVID-19) in or from a vehicle
https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/vehicles
Coronavirus (COVID-19): safer transport guidance for operators
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-safer-transport-guidance-for-operators
Guidance for shipping and sea ports on coronavirus (COVID-19)
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-shipping-and-sea-ports-guidance

USA

COVID-19 Guidance for Rideshare, Taxi, and Car Service Workers
https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA4021.pdf

Italy

Coronavirus, from Mit guidelines on safety in transport and logistics
http://www.mit.gov.it/comunicazione/news/coronavirus-trasporti-logistica-logistica-e-trasporti/coronavirus-da-mit-linee

Germany

F*act sheet corona virus - infection protection in the taxi business*

https://www.bg-verkehr.de/coronavirus/tipps-fuer-unternehmen-und-ihre-beschaeftigtenAdd a subheading

FAQ ABOUT THE CORONAVIRUS

https://www.deutsche-flagge.de/en/coronavirus?set_language=en

Coronavirus fact sheet - infection protection in letter and parcel logistics

https://www.bg-verkehr.de/medien/medienkatalog/infoblaetter/faktenblatt-corona-brief-und-paketlogistik/at_download/file

Tips for companies and their employees

https://www.bg-verkehr.de/coronavirus/tipps-fuer-unternehmen-und-ihre-beschaeftigten

European Union

Considerations for infection prevention and control measures on public transport in the context of COVID-19

https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/publications-data/covid-19-prevention-and-control-measures-public-transport

G*uidelines on protection of health, repatriation and travel arrangements for seafarers, passengers and other persons on board*

https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1587372584657&uri=CELEX%3A52020XC0414%2801%29

Human health and social work activities

Canada
Protecting Yourself and Others (Emergency and Patient Intake)
https://www.ccohs.ca/images/products/pandemiccovid19/pdf/emergency_patient_intake.pdf

Italy
Covid-19 and protection of health workers - second edition
https://www.inail.it/cs/internet/comunicazione/pubblicazioni/catalogo-generale/pubbl-covid-19-operatori-sanitari-seconda-versione.html

European Union
Infection prevention and control and preparedness for COVID-19 in healthcare settings - third update
https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/publications-data/infection-prevention-and-control-and-preparedness-covid-19-healthcare-settings

Public administration and defence; compulsory social security (Essential services)

Canada
Protecting Yourself and Others (First Responders)
https://www.ccohs.ca/images/products/pandemiccovid19/pdf/first_responders.pdf

Protecting Yourself and Others (Correctional Facilities)
https://www.ccohs.ca/images/products/pandemiccovid19/pdf/correctional_facilities.pdf

United Kingdom
Working safely during coronavirus (COVID-19) in offices and contact centres
https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/offices-and-contact-centres

Germany
FBFHB-016 "Instructions for emergency personnel on how to deal with or protect against the coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 and pandemic-related restrictions"
https://publikationen.dguv.de/regelwerk/fachbereich-aktuell/feuerwehren-hilfeleistungen-brandschutz/3786/fbfhb-016-hinweise-fuer-einsatzkraefte-zum-umgang-mit-bzw.-zum-schutz-vor-dem-coronavirus-sars-cov-2

Agriculture, forestry and fishing

Canada
Protecting Yourself and Others (Agriculture)
https://www.ccohs.ca/images/products/pandemiccovid19/pdf/agriculture.pdf

Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles

Canada
Protecting Yourself and Others (Retail)
https://www.ccohs.ca/images/products/pandemiccovid19/pdf/retail.pdf

United Kingdom
Working safely during coronavirus (COVID-19) in food businesses
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-food-businesses/guidance-for-food-businesses-on-coronavirus-covid-19

Working safely during coronavirus (COVID-19) in shops and branches
https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/shops-and-branches

Germany
Notices for cash registers and service counters in German
https://www.bghw.de/die-bghw/faq/faqs-rund-um-corona/spezielle-fragen-fuer-beschaeftigte-im-handel-und-in-der-warenlogistik/aushaenge-fuer-kassen-und-bedientheke-deutsch

Singapore
Safe Management Measures required at the workplace after the circuit breaker period
https://www.gov.sg/article/safe-management-measures-required-at-the-workplace-after-the-circuit-breaker-period

Accommodation and food service activities

Canada
Protecting Yourself and Others (Restaurants and Food Services)
https://www.ccohs.ca/images/products/pandemiccovid19/pdf/food_service.pdf

United Kingdom
Working safely during (COVID-19) in restaurants offering takeaway or delivery
https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/restaurants-offering-takeaway-or-delivery

USA

COVID-19 Guidance for Restaurants & Beverage Vendors Offering Takeout or Curbside Pickup

https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA4017.pdf

Italy

Technical document on the hypothesis of remodelling of the measures to contain SARS-CoV-2 contagion in the restaurant sector

https://www.inail.it/cs/internet/comunicazione/pubblicazioni/catalogo-generale/pubbl-doc-tecnico-ipotesi-rimod-misure-cont-ristorazione-covid-2.html

PROFESSIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL ACTIVITIES

United Kingdom

Working safely during coronavirus (COVID-19) for indoor labs and research facilities and similar environments.

https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/labs-and-research-facilities

MANUFACTURING

Canada

Protecting Yourself and Others (Manufacturing)

https://www.ccohs.ca/images/products/pandemiccovid19/pdf/manufacturing.pdf

United Kingdom

Working safely during coronavirus (COVID-19) for factories, plants and warehouses.

https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/factories-plants-and-warehouses

USA

COVID-19 Guidance for the Manufacturing Industry Workforce

https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA4002.pdf

Singapore

COVID-19 Guidelines on Safe Management for the Manufacturing Sector

https://www.edb.gov.sg/en/news-and-events/news/guidelines-on-safe-management-measures-for-the-manufacturing.html

MINING AND QUARRYING
Canada
Protecting Yourself and Others (Mining)
https://www.ccohs.ca/images/products/pandemiccovid19/pdf/mining.pdf

ARTS, ENTERTAINMENT AND RECREATION
Italy
Technical document on risk analysis and containment measures of SARS-CoV-2 contagion in recreational bathing and beach activities
https://www.inail.it/cs/internet/comunicazione/pubblicazioni/catalogo-generale/pubbl-doc-tecnico-att-ricr-balneazione-spiaggia-covid-2.html

EDUCATION
Canada
Protecting Yourself and Others (Daycares)
https://www.ccohs.ca/images/products/pandemiccovid19/pdf/day_cares.pdf

United Kingdom
Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance for educational settings
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-educational-settings-about-covid-19/guidance-to-educational-settings-about-covid-19

Coronavirus (COVID-19): implementing protective measures in education and childcare settings
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-protective-measures-in-education-and-childcare-settings

CONSTRUCTION
Canada
Protecting Yourself and Others (Construction)
https://www.ccohs.ca/images/products/pandemiccovid19/pdf/construction.pdf

United Kingdom
Working safely during coronavirus (COVID-19) in outdoor working environments.
https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/construction-and-other-outdoor-work

USA
Guidance for the Construction Workforce
https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA4000.pdf

Germany

SARS-CoV-2 occupational safety standard for the construction industry

https://www.bgbau.de/service/angebote/medien-center-suche/medium/2016/

Italy

Coronavirus: Da Mit safety guidelines on construction sites

http://www.mit.gov.it/comunicazione/news/coronavirus/coronavirus-da-mit-linee-guida-sulla-sicurezza-nei-cantieri-edili

GENERAL

United Kingdom

https://www.hse.gov.uk/news/assets/docs/working-safely-guide.pdf
https://iosh.com/l,;]i457